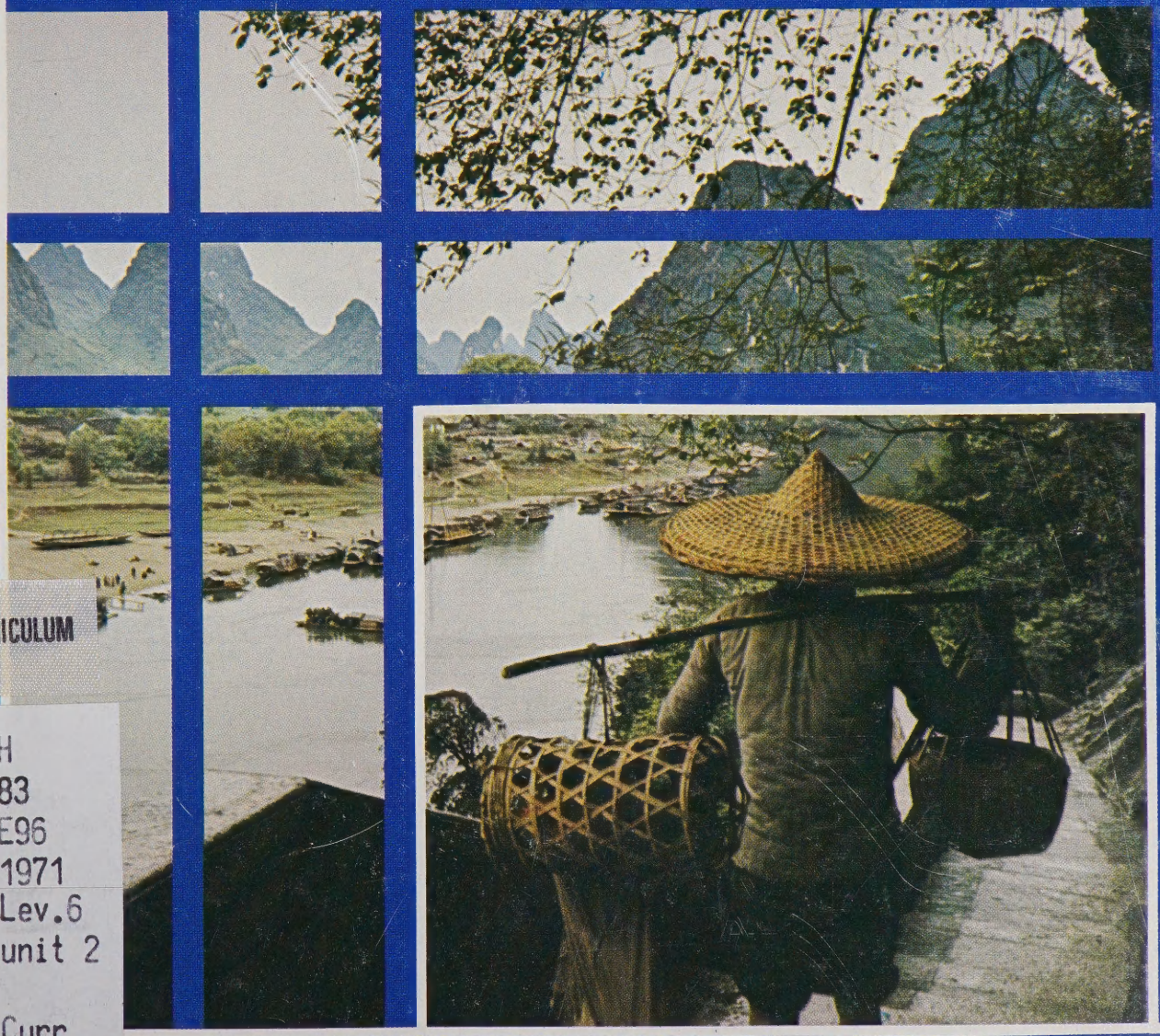
CONFUCIAN CHINA



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LEARNING ABOUT COUNTRIES AND SOCIETIES

CONFUCIAN CHINA

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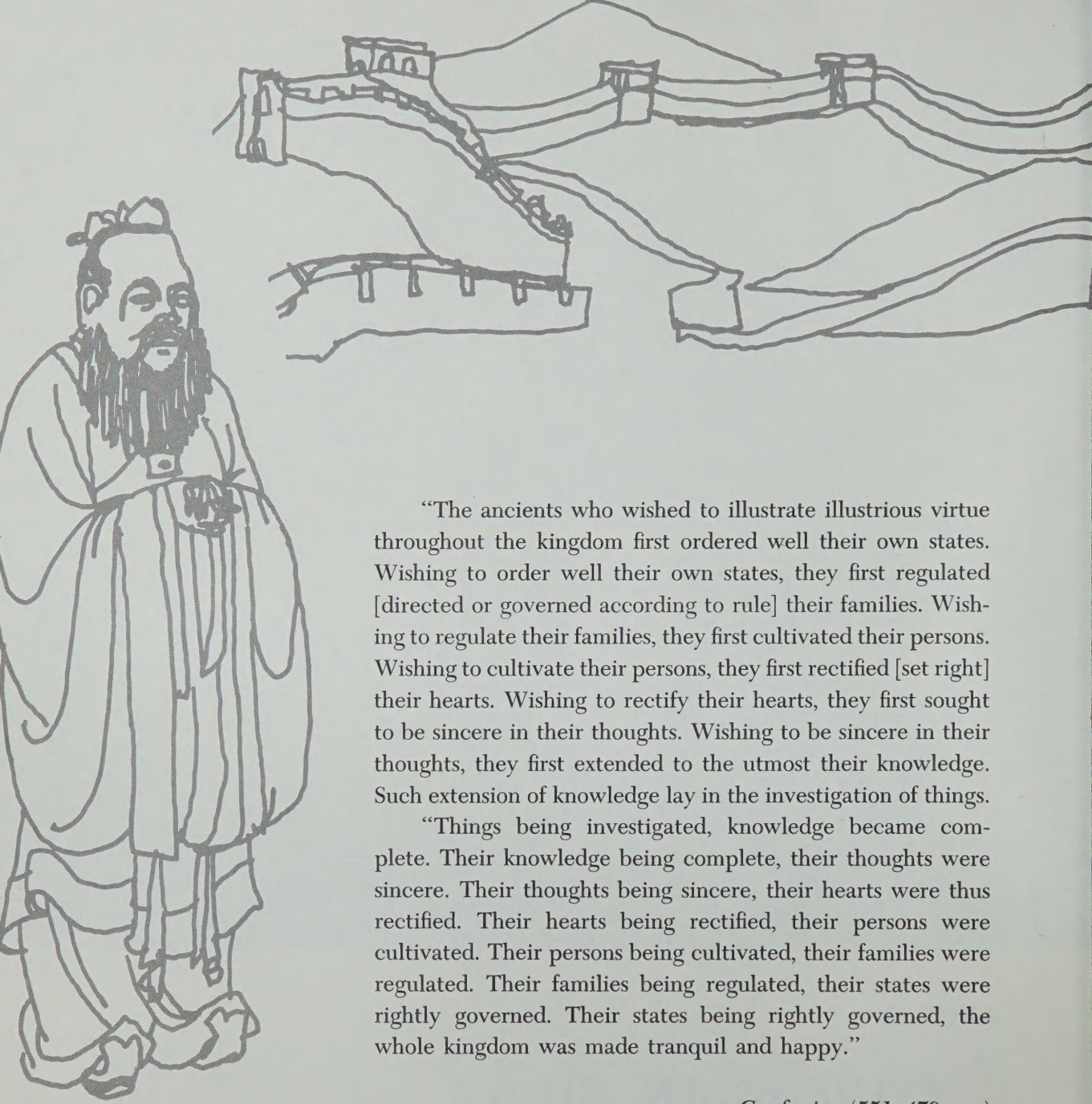

"The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the kingdom first ordered well their own states. Wishing to order well their own states, they first regulated [directed or governed according to rule] their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified [set right] their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.

"Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were thus rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy."

—*Confucius* (*551–479* B.C.)

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Chapter 1

A Geographer Looks at China

The civilization of China has lasted longer than any other civilization in the world. China's language, government, and private and public moral code show a continuous chain of development for more than 3000 years. The Chinese have been divided and weakened by internal wars many times. Their ways of life and their ways of government have changed through the centuries. Yet their civilization has never been destroyed by an outside conqueror.

One major reason for the survival of the Chinese civilization is the geography of China. It is tremendous in size and surrounded by natural barriers.

Nature Provided Isolation for China

Nature provided China with an almost perfect means of isolating herself. On the east, is the great Pacific Ocean. The Pacific is so large and awesome that man only learned how to travel across it in fairly modern times. In the south and west, China is barricaded by tremendous mountain ranges—5000 miles of the highest mountains in the world, including the Himalayas. To the northeast there are two huge deserts, one in Turkestan and one, the Gobi Desert, in Mongolia. The Himalayas are fortified, too, by the plateau of Tibet where many tens of thousands of square miles are higher than the summit of the highest mountain in Western Europe.

Nomads The people who lived on the boundaries of ancient China were *nomads*—herders who travel from place to place looking for food for their animals. The nomads often raided nearby farms for food. They were a nuisance to the Chinese, but they also provided an obstacle to any invader from the north or west.

Cultural Isolation So great was China's natural isolation, that it is beginning to

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A group of peaks in the Himalayas on China's southern border. Can you understand why these mountains provided China with natural isolation?

break down only now. One of the reasons this took so long was that the closely united Chinese people desired cultural isolation as well as natural isolation. The Chinese, proud of their age-old civilization, wanted nothing to do with outsiders. On their boundaries, the Chinese only met people whom they called "barbarians." These people did not have as well developed a civilization as the Chinese did, which led the Chinese to believe that they were the whole civilized world. They called this world "The Middle Kingdom."

To be Chinese was to be a member of a culture or civilization, not only a member of a state or a nation. This is one reason why the Chinese stayed united even after severe internal wars. They always felt they were one people, united by language, customs, and beliefs. Historically, China's development has been more self-contained than that of Europe, Persia, India, or even ancient Greece.

CHINA TODAY
China of Confucius' Time
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The Land and Climate of China

China is geographically divided into two parts by the Yangtze River and the central mountain ranges. The northern and southern parts of China differ like day from night in climate, kind of land, and even the people themselves. Thousands of years ago Chinese civilization developed in North China. Scholars believe that the geography of the north played an important part in that development.

The Loess For much of the year North China is yellow. The Yellow River cuts its way through soft, yellow *loess* (pronounced like "less"), a windblown, fertile, dusty soil which thickly covers the northern highlands and the North China plains. The loess deposits were formed in prehistoric times by high winds carrying dust from the mountains and deserts in the north. The dust dropped on the plains. In some places the deposit is 300 feet thick.

With too little water, the loess forms a hard crust. Too much water washes away the loess, leaving deep ravines in the land. But when the loess has just the right amount of rainfall and irrigation, it is very fertile and easy to dig in and hoe. It is mainly because of the loess that Chinese civilization began where it did, for the loess made the land in the north relatively easy to farm.

In what ways do you think good farmland would affect the development of a civilization?

North China's Rivers Despite the fertile loess, China could not grow food for its people without the giant rivers that run across the land. The two largest and most important rivers in the north are the Yangtze and the Huang Ho (Huang Ho means "Yellow River" in English). For the last 1000 years the Yangtze area has been a more important part of China than the Yellow River valley. But in Confucian China, the Yellow River was the river which affected people's lives more than any other. Because the Yellow River overflows its banks so often, it is called "China's Sorrow."

At the top, the mouth of the Huang Ho River in the nineteenth century. At the bottom, a modern view of the Huang Ho, or Yellow, River. Do you think that the Huang Ho is more or less important to the Chinese people today than it was to the people of China in Confucian times? Why? What do you think the Chinese people today do about river floods?

This view of the Yellow River comes from a beautifully detailed, hand-painted Chinese scroll, that was made around the year 1500. The scroll is called "Spring Festival on the Yellow River." See how many different activities you can pick out. What do you think the people might have been celebrating?

Floods The loess is so easily carried away by water and the wind that at times the Yellow River is about 46 percent dust. Then, the river looks like yellow mud. As it moves across the plain, it deposits mud, or *silt*, along its way, constantly raising the level of the river bed.

From earliest times, the Chinese have had to build dikes (earthen walls) to keep the Yellow River within its channel. Between the dikes, the river is 10 to 40 feet above the level of the surrounding land. A single break in the dikes can flood hundreds of square miles and affect millions of farmers. A flood can cover the land with a thick layer of silt and it takes years for the land to become good farm land again. Over the past 3000 years the Yellow River has overflowed its banks more than 1500 times. Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed in floods.

The River Changes Breaks in the dikes, floods, and the buildup of silt have caused dramatic changes in the path of the Yellow River. Several times the mouth of the river has moved from the north to the south of the Shantung peninsula.

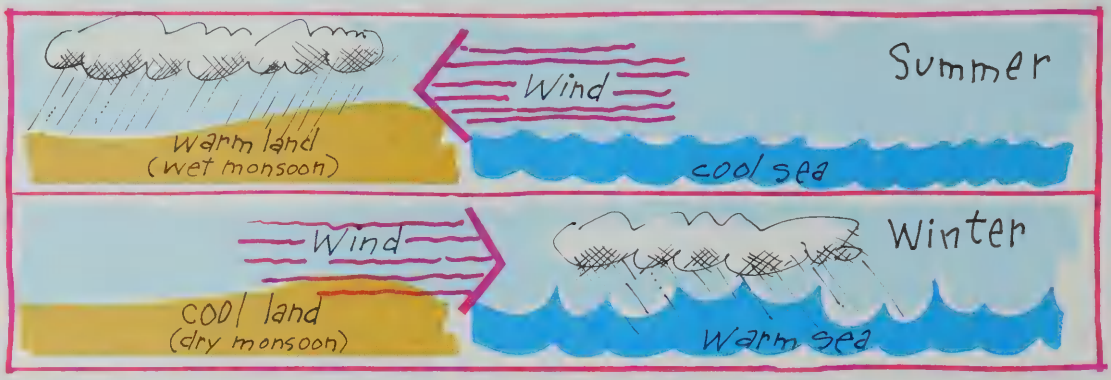
On the opposite page, a farmer in North China breaks up the loess to get it ready for planting. Do you think that the geography of North China has any influence on the method he is using? What other factors might help to determine farming methods?

What might happen to farmland that was alongside a river if the river turned away from it?

Farmers along the Yellow River could have a year of feast followed by a year of famine. Why?

The Yellow River, with its frequent floods and shifting course, is also unnavigable for much of its course from the mountains to the sea. (A *navigable* river is one on which boats can travel.) This fact made transportation and communication very difficult in China's early history, when travel by land was also difficult.

The Yellow North As you have read, the color that you see most in North China is yellow. The land is yellow; the rivers are yellow. Peasants even made their mud houses of the yellow soil that was available. One of the chief crops in the north is *kaoliang*. It has cornlike leaves which turn yellow very early in the growing season. It is not difficult to imagine why yellow used to be the national color of China, and why one of the titles of the emperors, who wore yellow robes, was "Lord of the Yellow Land."



The Monsoons Most of China's rainfall comes from the summer monsoon. A *monsoon* is a wind that blows annually in specific seasons. The word *monsoon* comes to us from the Arabic word for *season.* Monsoons are caused by great variations in temperature between the land air and the sea air. Because land heats faster and cools quicker than water, the land and the water are not always the same temperature. When the cooler air rushes in over warmer areas, a wind is created—the monsoon. In summer, the monsoon winds travel from the cooler sea to warmer land and bring rain. In winter the monsoon winds travel from the cooler land to the warmer sea; thus the winter monsoon is a dry monsoon. Look at the chart above.

The summer winds blow from the Pacific to the deserts in northern China. These southerly and southeasterly monsoon winds pick up water from the Pacific and drop it on China. If the strength of the monsoon winds is just right, enough moisture will be dropped on both the Yangtze and the Yellow River areas to water the crops. Too weak a wind will carry the water only to the Yangtze, and the Yellow River area will suffer a drought. Too strong a monsoon wind will carry the water beyond the Yangtze and cause floods in the Yellow River area. In most years, the Chinese are troubled either by droughts or by floods.

What effects do you think droughts and floods have on the lives of agricultural people?

All Chinese governments have given a great deal of attention to controlling

Chinese workers carry building materials to construct a dam on the Yellow River. What other uses are there for a dam besides flood control?

floods and providing water during droughts. The Grand Canal built centuries ago stretches 1100 miles from Peking in the north to Hangchow in the south. With connecting irrigation networks, this canal helps to provide water when there is a drought. The flood-control dikes on the North China plain run for hundreds of miles. The canals and dikes were built entirely by human labor. Enormous numbers of people were needed to build them and to keep them in repair. At one time, every peasant was required to give one month a year to this work.

Would you be willing to help build dikes if your home were in danger of being flooded? Why?

The Problems of River Floods

The selection which follows vividly describes the river floods which have occurred in China for thousands of years. It appears in *The Good Earth,* a book by Pearl Buck, an American woman who spent many years in China.

"Then it all came to pass as Wang Lung had foreseen. The river to the north burst its dykes, its furthermost dykes first . . . and the river burst yet another dyke and another before it was content with the space it had for itself, and then it wore away these walls of earth until none could tell where a dyke had been in that whole country and the river swelled and rolled like a sea over all the good farming land, and the wheat and the young rice were at the bottom of the sea.

"One by one the villages were made into islands and men watched the water rising and when it came within two feet of their doorways they bound their tables and beds together and put the doors of their houses upon them for rafts, and they piled what they could of their bedding and their clothes and their women and children on these rafts. And the water rose into the earthen houses and softened the walls and burst them apart and they melted down into the water and were as if they had never been. And then as if water on earth drew water from heaven it rained as though the earth were in drought. Day after day it rained. . . .

"There were no harvests of any kind that year and everywhere people starved and were hungry and were angry at what had befallen them yet again. Some went south, and some who

were bold and angry and cared nothing for what they did joined the robber bands that flourished everywhere in the countryside. . . . And besides those who robbed and those who went south to work and to beg, . . . there were others who were old and tired and timid, and who had no sons, like Ching, and these stayed and starved and ate grass and what leaves they could find on high places and many died upon the land and water.

"Then Wang Lung saw that a famine such as he had never seen was upon the land, for the water did not recede in time to plant the wheat for winter and there could be no harvest then the next year."

From what you have read, would you think that the flooding has occurred before? How do you know?

What had the people built to keep the river from flooding? How successful were their efforts? How do you think the ancient Chinese people felt when these great floods came? Why did those who were able take their possessions and move to the south?

Find out what rivers in the United States flood their banks and leave people homeless? In what season of the year is flooding likely to occur? Why? In what way does modern science aid people who are likely to become flood victims? What agencies bring aid to people who have lost their homes and belongings in a serious flood?

What modern methods of flood control are more effective than those used by the ancient Chinese?

Compare the farms of South and North China. Above, green fields and a farmer with a water buffalo in the south. Opposite, loess terraces in the north.

South China South China is wet and green practically all year long. It has many lakes and ponds and about 100,000 miles of canals, which often take the place of roads.

South China is a fertile area. The warm, moist climate allows several growing seasons in each year. The most important crop in South China is rice, the main part of every southern Chinese diet. The people in the north eat bread and noodles made from the wheat they grow, while the Southerners eat mainly rice, fish, and fruit.

Even the animals differ from north to south. The southern Chinese make great use of the water buffalo, while the Northerners use camels, donkeys, and mules.

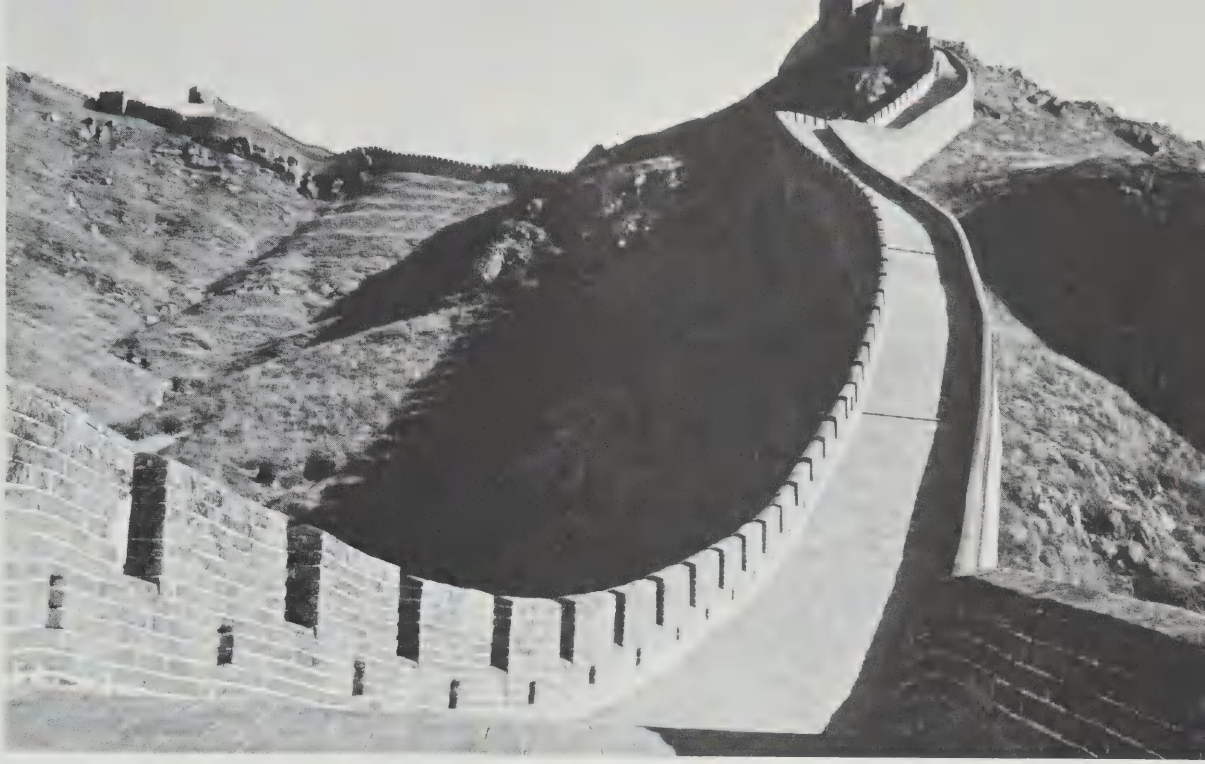
From what you have read, why do you think that the people in each area use the animals that they do? Why do you think animals are important to the people?

"The sun beat down upon them, for it was early summer, and her face was soon dripping with her sweat. Wang Lung had his coat off and his back bare . . . Moving together in a perfect rhythm, without a word, hour after hour . . . [h]e had no [clear] thought of anything; there was only this perfect sympathy of movement, of turning this earth of theirs over and over to the sun, this earth which formed their home and fed their bodies and made their gods. The earth lay rich and dark, and fell apart lightly under the points of their hoes. . . . Some time, in some age, bodies of men and women had been buried there, houses had stood there, had fallen and gone back into the earth. So would . . . their house, some time return into the earth, their bodies also. Each had his turn at this earth. They worked on, moving together—together producing the fruit of this earth . . ."

The Good Earth Hundreds of millions of people have been supported by China's good land. For century after century, the most familiar sight in China has been the peasants in the fields. The text beside the photograph above describes such a scene in a novel about China.

Do you think that working in the fields was something that Wang Lung and his wife did often?

Do you think that Wang Lung felt that he could change the land around him? Explain your answer.



The Great Wall: A Man-Made Barrier

During the second century B.C. another isolating barrier was added to the Chinese, but this barrier was built by men, not by nature. The Chinese Emperor Shih Huang wanted to unite all of the states and provinces into one, making a single Chinese empire. He encouraged all the powerful families to leave their home territories and come to live in the capital. These people were happy to be part of the emperor's court, but Shih Huang disappointed them when he appointed his own officials to run the government. He divided the power among many so that no one man could become his rival. He therefore gained control—and responsibility—over a vast area.

Shih Huang had little to worry about from the south, but the nomadic tribes of the north frequently raided the Chinese villages under his jurisdiction. Stone walls had been built here and there but they did little good. So Shih Huang gave orders for a great wall to be built across the northern

boundaries of his empire. All of the small walls were to be strengthened and lengthened and then joined into one long wall. Thousands of Chinese worked on this great wall for many years and by 213 B.C., the Great Wall of China was finished. It stretched for almost 2000 miles and had 25,000 towers. Thousands of soldiers were set up along its walks as guards. In the long run the Great Wall did not prove to be as effective a barrier as Shih Huang had hoped. However it is one more example of the Chinese people's desire to isolate themselves from outsiders.

REVIEWING THE CHAPTER

1. What are China's natural barriers?
2. What has helped the Chinese remain a united people?
3. What is loess? How was it formed? Why has it been so valuable?
4. Why have floods been a constant danger to the Chinese? What have the Chinese done to protect themselves from floods?
5. What is a monsoon? What benefits does the summer monsoon provide? What disadvantages can it cause?

Chapter 2

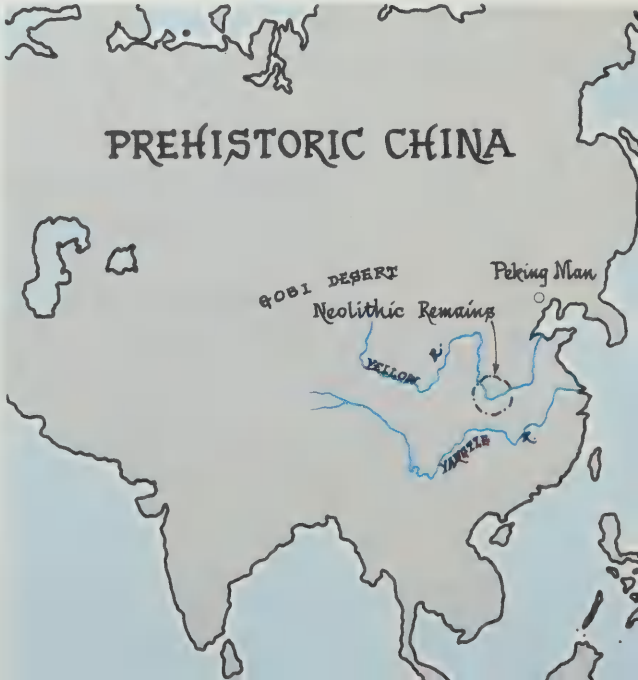
A Historian Looks at Confucian China

One question that historians ask when they study the past is *what important ideas began long ago that still influence man today?* The historian who investigates China finds that one of the strongest influences in Chinese history is the philosophy of Confucius, a man who lived from 551 to 479 B.C. The thoughts of Confucius and his followers still influence Chinese life today.

Man's ideas are affected by what life is like around him and by what he knows about life in the past. Thus, the historian looks at the world in which Confucius lived in order to understand the man and his philosophy.

China: From Early Man to Feudalism

The first people who lived in China lived in the fertile valley of the Yellow River in North China—half a million years ago! Over a period of hundreds of thousands of years these people, like all early men, gradually learned to farm and then began to live in larger groups. Eventually there were cities. Some of these clusters of people grew into little states, with the ruler of the area, the prince, having power over all of the people in his small principality. (An area that is governed by a prince is called a *principality.*)



The Mystery of the Dragon Bones

A hundred years ago, medicine in China—like medicine in the United States and much of Europe—was very unscientific. Medicines were often composed of strange mixtures thought to have magic powers to cure the sick.

One of the strangest cures ever prescribed for man was a powder made from what Chinese doctors thought were dragon's bones. The uneducated peasants of China sincerely believed in the existence of dragons and eagerly sought relief from their ills by taking the magic powder.

The mystery of the dragon bones begins about 1860 when pieces of very old bones began to appear in the fields of one Chinese province. The bones were very finely polished, and they were marked with oval notches and cracks in the shape of a T. Sometimes they were decorated with an odd type of writing or small pictures.

It is said that a farmer named Li first found these objects and decided they were dragon's bones. He gathered together as many as he could find and sold them to a chemist who ground them into powder for medicine. And so for forty years the dragon's bones were swallowed as a magic potion.

About 1900 a man with a more scientific attitude examined some of the unground bones. It was he who first realized that the curious decoration on the bones was writing and that it must have been placed there for some purpose. The writing, however, was so old that no scholar could decipher it until only about thirty-five years ago. From this fact, what can you

conclude about the change in the characters used by the Chinese in writing their language?

Today we know that the dragon bones were really oracle bones. An *oracle* is a person (as a priest) through whom a god is believed to speak. In ancient China, the priests used the oracle bones of ordinary animals to answer questions which the kings asked of the gods.

The ancient kings would ask the priest questions about the harvest or war or politics. The priest would then mark the questions on the bones and heat them until they cracked. The direction and size of the cracks determined if the answer was yes or no. Sometimes the priest wrote the answer on the bone itself.

Because of the questions written on the bones, archaeologists and historians have learned a great deal about ancient China. They can tell what the crops were, what the climate was, how the people planted the soil, with whom they went to war, and how they fought.

When the peasants discovered that the bones in their fields were valuable evidence, they began to dig deeper. Since they were not scientists trained to dig carefully without disturbing other archaeological finds below the surface of the earth, they destroyed remains of buildings and other treasures. Nevertheless, they found ancient tombs containing beautiful bronze vessels inscribed with writing and decorations.

Today we know much about the ancient Chinese from studying the bronze vessels found by peasants digging for dragon's bones.

Dynasties In time, some of the small principalities became more powerful than others around them, and the strong conquered the weak. Finally, dynasties developed. A *dynasty* is a succession of rulers who come from the same family. Dynasties became possible when one ruler became powerful enough to control a very large area of land and people, and to pass the control from one member of his family to another. The control usually passed from father to son.

In ancient China the ruling dynasty did not control all of the people who lived in what is now China. But the dynasty whose name is used for a period of time in Chinese history was the strongest ruling group at the time.

Sometimes another group of people with a leader became strong. Often, they lived geographically far away from the ruling dynasty. If this new power became large enough and strong enough, it conquered the old dynasty, and then a new period of Chinese history, with a new name, began.

The Chou Dynasty Confucius lived during the period of the Chou dynasty. This dynasty, the longest in China's history, lasted for about 800 years—from about 1050 B.C. to 221 B.C.

Above, a bronze wine cup from the Shang dynasty, which came before the Chou dynasty. Opposite, a bronze pot from the Chou dynasty.

The Chou people came from a valley near the Yellow River—on the western frontier of the area controlled by the ruling dynasty. The Chou were a strong group, used to fighting to defend their territory against the nomads who lived on their northern and western borders.

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Why do you think the Chou people became a strong group? Think about this imaginary situation for some ideas:

The people who live in Green Area are farmers. No one lives near their area; no one ever attacks them. The people who live in Blue Area are farmers also, but they are surrounded by people who attack them, destroying or stealing their animals and produce. Now, which group—the Greens or the Blues—is the more likely to band together? Why? In which group are strong leaders more apt to develop? Why? Which group will develop more skill at fighting? Why?

As the Chou people became stronger, they conquered areas around them. Finally, in the eleventh century B.C., the weakened Shang rulers were unable to defend themselves against these western frontiersmen. The Shang dynasty toppled and the Chou dynasty began.

Feudalism The Chou had conquered a very large kingdom which they now had to control. This kingdom, which they called the Middle Kingdom, was too big to be ruled as one single state at a time when transportation and communication were slow and difficult. The Chou's solution to their problem was to divide their kingdom up into almost 2000 small "states" and to put a lord, or *vassal*, in charge of each state. These lords were usually relatives or friends of the ruling king, and he expected them to remain loyal to him.

The Chou rulers had set up a system of government that we call **feudalism.** Eleven hundred years before the birth of Christ, the Chou had created a way of governing that would be repeated in Western Europe almost 2000 years later.

The states were in five areas, like circles around the capital. The central area was the capital, which the king governed. Closest to the capital were states governed by lords who were close relatives of the royal family—the king's aides. In the third circle were states governed by lords who were more distant relatives of the royal family. The states in the fourth circle were ruled by loyal lords who had helped conquer the Shang. The lands beyond that, the farthest from the center of the kingdom, were inhabited by those lords whose loyalty to the king was uncertain, and by barbarian tribes.

Why would the Chou kings distribute control of the states in this way? Why would they place lords whose loyalty they doubted the farthest from the capital?

The king gave each of the lords a large area of land. The lord had complete rights over the land and the people living on it. In return, the lord had to give the king military aid when the king needed it; he had to report to the king's court from time to time; he had to make certain gifts or tributes to the king; and most important, he was expected to give the king his complete allegiance.

What do you think of the Chou's organization of their kingdom? What will it take to make this plan work?

Feudal Life in Ancient China

The Peasants' Life What about the subjects whom the king's feudal lords ruled? The vast majority of the people in the Chou kingdom were peasants. These peasants were almost the "property" of the lords, for the lord could do with them exactly what he wished. Their life was hard, with no privileges but many demands. An old Chinese saying sums up nicely how the nobles felt about the peasants. It goes something like this: Ceremonies do not reach low enough to include the people, and the laws governing crimes and punishment do not reach up as far as the nobility.

The peasants were usually put in groups of eight families. Each group farmed a piece of land divided into nine sections. One section was farmed by each family for itself, and the ninth section was farmed by all of them for the lord. But the lord's section had to be worked on before the peasants could tend to their own.

The peasants made farm tools and rice wine and clothing. Everything they made went to their lord, except what the peasants needed for their own simple lives.

The peasants were the lord's work force. They were required to work in labor gangs to build roads, to repair bridges, and to build dikes and dams to hold back the ever-present river floods.

The peasants were also the lord's military force. At any time he could call them from the fields and march them into battle—either for the king or against some other feudal lord. The peasants were the soldiers that the lord needed to fulfill his obligations to his king, to protect his feudal domain, or to take someone else's. The peasants made the lord powerful, but they had no power of their own.

Long ago, probably even before the Chou dynasty, the Chinese began to make silk cloth. Chinese silk became a luxury in great demand in the Roman Empire. Today, making silk is still an important industry in China, and Chinese silk is known throughout the world. Here are four scenes of the modern Chinese silk industry. This page, silkworms feeding and silkworm cocoons. Opposite page, weighing the spun silk, and factory workers spinning silk thread onto spools.

The Lords' Power Each feudal lord received produce and labor from the peasants under him. Sometimes peasants were called upon to give their lives for him. In the early years of the Chou dynasty each feudal lord gave military assistance, tributes, and allegiance to the king. The lords, however, controlled almost every aspect of life in their state.

The king, the lords, and their families were the nobility of ancient China. Compared to the peasants, they lived a good life. Education and good manners were important to the nobility. They had a strong code of behavior, with definite rules for courtesy, even in battle.

The nobility was educated, but they guarded education and knowledge carefully for themselves. Only the nobles were taught how to read and write.

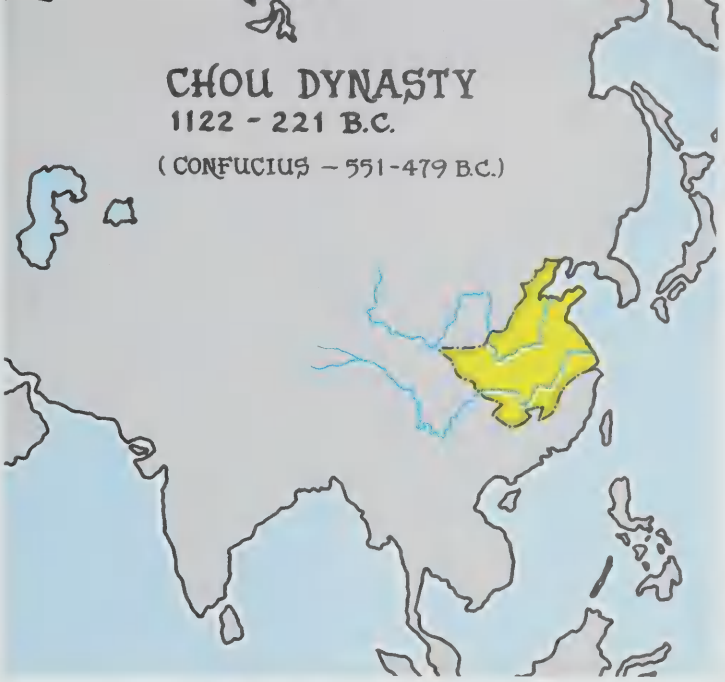
Why did the nobility want to keep the peasants from knowing how to read and write? What power would this give to the nobility?

How would your life be different if you could neither read nor write?

The King's Power What was the power of the king in the Chou feudal system? The person who had the most direct control over the peasants' lives was the feudal lord, not the king. And the feudal lords had a great deal of power. They could command armies of their peasants, they had access to crops and land, and there were many lords and only one king. In a situation like this, how did the early Chou kings stay in power and control their kingdoms?

The king was the only person who had the power to give land to a lord or take it away from him. This was a strong power, but the most important source of power for the early Chou rulers was religious power. There was no organized church or religion in ancient China, but there was a strong spiritual belief. This belief centered on the idea that the king ruled by a "Mandate from Heaven"; in other words, he received his command directly from Heaven. The king was called the "Son of Heaven," and it was he who interpreted the will of Heaven for the people. The king was the only person who could perform certain religious ceremonies which gave the people fertile fields and protected them from Heaven's anger. The king, the lords, and all of the people believed in this "Mandate from Heaven."

Why would a spiritual power have such a strong control over the people of ancient China?



The Old Structures Break Down

The Decline of the Chou Dynasty In the eighth century B.C. the power structure of the Chou dynasty began to change. The Middle Kingdom was invaded by peoples from the north. The invaders did not conquer the Middle Kingdom, but gradually, military power became more important than spiritual power to the people.

Why would military power become more important than spiritual power?

Gradually, the feudal lords became more powerful than the king. As the central control of the kingdom became weaker, feudal lords began fighting among themselves. The strong conquered the weak, and by the sixth century B.C. a few feudal states controlled the kingdom.

The Chou kings had become just symbols with no power. However, no one feudal state had become strong enough to conquer all of the other states in the Middle Kingdom and begin a new dynasty.

Think about the way the feudal system had been organized. Why couldn't the king fight and defeat the lords?

A Chinese Poet's View of Life

The poem which follows was written by Ts'ao Chih (A.D. 192–232) who titled it "The Ruins of Lo-yang." He wrote about returning to look at this city where he had once lived. As you read the poem, think about his shock at the results of war.

I climb to the ridge of Pei Mang Mountain
And look down on the city of Lo-yang.
In Lo-yang how still it is!
Palaces and houses all burnt to ashes.
Walls and fences all broken and gaping,
Thorns and brambles shooting up to the sky.
I do not see the old-men:
I only see the new young men.
I turn aside, for the straight road is lost:
The fields are overgrown and will never be
ploughed again.
I have been away such a long time
That I do not know which street is which.
How sad and ugly the empty moors are!
A thousand miles without the smoke of a chimney.
I think of the house I lived in all those years:
I am heart-tied and cannot speak.

What do you think life was like for people during the period about which Ts'ao Chih wrote?

Hardships of Change The declining centuries of the Chou dynasty were a terrible time for the people of the Middle Kingdom. The kings had no power and were at the mercy of their vassals, the lords. These vassals were constantly worried about defending their own power or taking away someone else's. The strong feudal system had disintegrated into something more like independent states fighting for control of each other.

The people who suffered the most during this time were the peasants. There were many more wars now, and the peasants were called far more often to drop their work and go to war, perhaps never to return. What men had built in the centuries before was often destroyed by battle or neglect—roads, irrigation ditches, vital flood controls, and good farms.

During the years of strong feudalism the people of the Middle Kingdom had lived with a set of rules and allegiances that they knew. Now the demanding but more stable situation of feudalism was gone, but no new stability had replaced it.

REVIEWING THE CHAPTER

1. What is a dynasty? When did dynasties become possible?
2. How did the Chou dynasty gain control of the Middle Kingdom?
3. Describe the organization of the feudal system as it existed in the Chou dynasty.
4. Describe the power of the king, the lords, and the peasants when the Chou feudal system was strong.
5. For what reasons and in what ways did the feudal system decline in the Chou dynasty?

Chapter 3

A Philosopher Looks at Confucian China

Throughout history people have looked around them and asked "Why." *Why does the sun come up? Why do I like John and dislike James? Why do all men die?* And people also ask "How." *How can I feed my family? How can I get from here to there? How can the world be made a better place to live?* All men ask some of these questions, and each man answers them a little differently.

Some people have devoted their entire lives to seeking the answers to their questions. Many of these questioners have been scientists who have discovered the atom and found ways to reach the moon and discovered cures for disease. Others have been explorers who sought to prove that the world was round or that life might exist at the North Pole.

Then there are those who concern themselves with *ethics*, a subject which deals with good and bad and with moral duty and obligation. These scholars seek answers to questions about human nature and conduct—how people feel and how people act and what people can do. Ethics is a branch of *philosophy*, and those who concern themselves with ethics are called philosophers. If you have read the unit on Greece, you already know that the word *philosophy* comes from two Greek words, *philos* which means "loving" and *sophia* which means "wisdom." A philosopher then is a lover of wisdom—one who searches for the truth.

Whenever war and human misery and unrest trouble a society, men ask certain inevitable questions: *How can we change this? Is there a better way of living and a better way of governing? Why has this happened?* People asked these questions 3000 years ago, and they ask them today. There have been many philosophers down through the ages who have tried to answer these questions.

With the decline of the Chou dynasty, the old way of life had fallen apart and no new order had replaced it. During this time in China, so many wise men developed new ideas about people and

government, morality and law that the period has been called "The Age of Philosophers." But the man whose thinking has had the most lasting effect was the philosopher Confucius.

A sacrificial ritual about Confucius goes like this: "Confucius! Confucius! How great is Confucius! Before Confucius there never was a Confucius! Confucius! Confucius! How great is Confucius!"

Confucius: His Life and Ideas

K'ung Fu-Tzu, whom we call Confucius, lived from 551 to 479 B.C. He was a member of the lower aristocracy; his father was not a lord, but he was part of the governing class. Because Confucius was part of the aristocracy, he was an educated man.

Confucius was only twenty-one years old when young men came to him for instruction. He taught for fifty years, but his real fame began after his death.

Why would it have been difficult for a Chinese peasant to have been a philosopher in Confucius' time?

Do the teachings of a philosopher affect only the upper class? The men who wrote the Declaration of Independence were educated men. Did their ideas of government and human rights affect only educated people?

Confucius. Notice that he holds a paper with writing, showing that he could read.

The Intent of Confucius Confucius looked around him at life in the Middle Kingdom. He saw the suffering of the peasants, the neglect of irrigation and flood control, the powerless king, and the fighting lords. By this time the Chou dynasty had turned into little more than a group of independent states with rulers fighting one another. Confucius was troubled by what he saw and he wanted to find solutions to his country's problems and to man's problems.

Like others in his time, Confucius looked back on feudalism as the "Golden Age." People forgot feudalism's problems and saw only the security and stability it could give the people. Confucius tried to find a way to bring back the stability of the "Golden Age." He developed a set of moral principles or values stating how people should behave as members of their family and of their society. He was not concerned with the rights of man as an individual, but rather with the ways men should behave toward each other in order to provide a contented and united society.

Ancient Greece had a "Golden Age" where philosophy, literature, and art grew and flourished. The people enjoyed peace and individual expression. The "Golden Age" of feudalism in China doesn't leave us with the same picture. How do you think it differed?

Confucius was born after feudalism had begun to decline. He could only read about its heyday and listen to stories that had been passed down through generations. Why do you think he thought that feudalism was the "Golden Age" of the Middle Kingdom?

The Five Virtues Confucius believed that all people must live in society; that is, with other people. He saw men not as individuals but in a series of relationships: ruler and subject, father and son, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife, friend and friend.

What do most of these relationships have in common? What clue does this give you about Confucius' ideas about authority and respect?

Confucius outlined a code of behavior—the five virtues—for people to follow in each of the five relationships. The virtues are concerned with the inner man, his attitudes toward himself and others—rules by which man lived. The first virtue is called *jen*, usually translated as "benevolence," or a disposition to do good. The

second virtue is close to the first in meaning and also called *jen;* in Chinese it is translated to mean "righteousness." *Chung,* the third virtue, means "reverence," or honor and respect. The fourth virtue, *chik,* means "wisdom." And the fifth, *hsin,* in Chinese and in English means "sincerity."

Confucius felt that a person should follow the virtues not for reward, but because he knows it is right to follow them.

If a man gives his word, he must keep it, even if conditions change. If a man calls another his friend, he is bound to loyalty to his friend, even if conditions make it difficult. If a man does not know the answer to a problem, he should honestly say he does not know.

What similarities do you see in the ideas of Confucius and ideas that people believe in today? Why do you think some of the same ideas about people's behavior are developed by different people at different times throughout history?

Confucius did not advise people to do the extraordinary and the impossible. His was a human, practical philosophy. A good life had to depend on the goodness of men, not on a lot of rules which men could not live up to. To Confucius, virtue should be enjoyed, not feared.

Why might people who follow virtues as outlined by Confucius be better citizens than those who follow rules that oppose these virtues?

Outward Forms Confucius was concerned with the inner man, but he was also concerned with outward appearance. A good man must do more than live by the five virtues. He must do so with care and style, using the proper rituals for the occasion. However, Confucius did not think that just observing the correct ritual was enough by itself. It must be felt, not just done. Confucius believed that by doing certain things in certain ways, a man's inner virtues would be strengthened. No matter what he had been before and no matter what level of society he had been born in, a man could improve himself and become a better person.

Confucius outlined five virtues and prescribed how to live by them in order to achieve a desired effect. What do you think about these ideas of Confucius? What is the importance of Confucius' idea that a person can improve himself?

The Ruler and the Ruled The virtues that Confucius described were virtues by which he thought all men should live,

including rulers. Confucius felt that the relationship between the ruler and his subjects was one of the most important relationships of all.

Confucius saw the effects of the disintegration of strong central government. He saw wicked rulers who cared nothing for their subjects and who were constantly fighting with one another. Confucius felt that all of the misery and unrest around him was the result of the rulers' way of ruling.

So Confucius said something that no one in the Middle Kingdom had ever said: The ruler has a *responsibility* to rule well! Confucius felt that if the ruler would look to past rulers and follow their example, then the people would follow the example of the ruler, and all would be well. Confucius felt that the people owed their ruler respect, but the ruler must be worthy of that respect. He must be a model to his subjects. Only when he leads a good life and rules well will the kingdom have peace.

Do you agree with Confucius about the effects of a good ruler upon the lives of his subjects in the Middle Kingdom? How do you feel when you hear that someone in the government has done something illegal or immoral?

Belief in Confucius Confucius had looked at the chaos around him and he had tried to put order into it. He developed a philosophy or code of living—for all levels of men—which he hoped would bring peace to his country and his people.

In Confucius' own lifetime, some educated people became his followers. They believed in Confucius; they helped him preach his beliefs to other people; and they wrote down his wise sayings so that others could know them. But the peasants could not read and had little time to think about these new ideas. And some of the educated people in the Middle Kingdom did not have any desire to follow Confucius.

Confucius traveled from state to state trying to convince the governing lords or rulers to follow his teachings. But most of the rulers wanted Confucius to tell them how they could become *powerful*, not how they should lead a good life.

Why didn't the peasants quickly adopt Confucius' teachings? Why didn't the rulers? Why does it sometimes take a long time before new ideas are accepted?

Confucius died in 479 B.C., thinking that he had been a failure. It would take time to prove that he was a success.

Confucius' Ideas About Government

Many of Confucius' writings are records of the conversations he had with others. As you read Confucius' ideas about government, keep in mind the fact that Chinese people today still quote the sayings of Confucius. Decide what you think about the sayings quoted here.

Confucius said, *"When the ruler himself does what is right, he will have influence over the people without giving commands, and when the ruler himself does not do what is right, all his commands will be of no avail."*

Tsekung asked about government, and Confucius replied: *"People must have sufficient to eat; there must be a sufficient army; and there must be confidence of the people in the ruler."*

"If you are forced to give up one of these three objectives, what would you go without first?" asked Tsekung.

Confucius said, *"I would go without the army first."*

"And if you were forced to go without one of the two remaining factors, what would you rather go without?" asked Tsekung again.

"I would rather go without sufficient food for the people. There have always been deaths in every generation since man lived, but a nation cannot exist without confidence in its ruler."

Do you think Confucius' ideas about government would work in the United States? Give reasons to support your answer.

Other Philosophers: Mencius and the Legalists

The philosophy of Confucius was to have the most lasting effect on Chinese history, but there were other influential philosophies during the Age of Philosophers. One of the most important was the philosophy of Mencius, a follower of Confucius. Another was the philosophy of the Legalists, who were opposed to Confucius' ideas.

Mencius Mencius lived in the Middle Kingdom about 150 years after the death of Confucius. Mencius believed in the teachings of Confucius, but he carried them one step further. Confucius said that the ruler has a responsibility to rule well. Mencius said that if the ruler does not rule well—with concern for the welfare of his subjects—then the subjects have the *right* to overthrow him.

What would the signers of the Declaration of Independence have thought about this teaching of Mencius?

Mencius also developed Confucius' concept of good government. Mencius said that all government officials should be chosen for their ability. Just because someone had been born into the governing class should not guarantee him a position in government. Anyone who was wise and could govern well could be part of the government.

Ever since Confucius developed his philosophy, wise men like Mencius who believed in his teachings have changed and added to what he originally said. This whole body of thought which centers around the teachings of Confucius is called **Confucianism.**

The Legalists Confucianism is based on the belief that man is good—and can become better. But the Legalists believed that people were naturally selfish and unreliable. They believed that a ruler could control his subjects only by punishing them very harshly and frequently and that a ruler had no responsibilities towards his subjects—but the subjects had many difficult responsibilities toward the ruler and his laws!

What did Confucius say about laws? What did the Legalists say about laws? Which philosophy do you think creates better citizens? Why? Why might some rulers prefer the Legalist philosophy? Why might some prefer Confucianism?

Government under the Ch'in and the Han Dynasties

The two dynasties that followed the Chou set patterns that would affect China until the twentieth century. The philosophies of Confucianism and the Legalists influenced the patterns followed by the Ch'in and Han dynasties.

The Overthrow of the Chou By the third century B.C. the Middle Kingdom was in chaos. All of the states were at war with one another. One state, the Ch'in, was becoming very powerful. Ch'in leaders had strong control over the people in their state, and they had taken over many smaller states.

The Ch'in lived in the northwestern part of the Middle Kingdom. There they had seen barbarians—wandering, uncivilized people—who fought on horseback instead of from the clumsy war chariots that people in the Middle Kingdom used for fighting. The Ch'in saw that fighting from horseback was much more effective than fighting from a chariot—so they began to fight on horseback.

Their new fighting techniques—and their strong government within the state—enabled the Ch'in to conquer the other states in the Middle Kingdom. By 221 B.C., the Chou dynasty was over and the Ch'in dynasty had begun. The Ch'in victory was not the work of only one strong leader. Instead, it was the result of the combined efforts of many talented men. In the language of modern politics, the Ch'in "system" had won.

What similarities and differences do you see in the rise to power of the Chou dynasty and the Ch'in dynasty?

The Ch'in leaders did not want to make the feudal system strong again. Instead, they united the Middle Kingdom under one very strong **central government.** They set up a system with the ruler at the top and many different levels of government officials under him. (The system of using many officials in a government is called **bureaucracy.**) Everyone was appointed by the ruler. The first Ch'in ruler, Shih Haung Ti, became the first Emperor of China.

What is a central government? What differences are there between the Ch'in government and the government of the United States?

Where do you think the name *China* came from?

The Chinese people domesticated the horse in ancient times, and the horse has played an important part in China's history. That importance is reflected in Chinese art. Here, a picture of a Ch'in warrior and his horse, and a statue of a horse and rider from the Han dynasty.

The Ch'in did not follow the teachings of Confucius. They believed in the Legalist philosophy, and they established a system of strict rules and harsh punishments. This legal code applied to everyone, from peasants to important government officials. To stop people from thinking about other forms of government, the Ch'in burned most of the books in China, especially books which included the teachings of Confucius.

What is the effect of having laws that apply to everyone? Do you think the same thing was true in the Chou dynasty? What is the power of a book? Why would the Ch'in want to burn books? Why didn't they want people to know about Confucius?

The harsh Ch'in dynasty lasted only fourteen years—the shortest dynasty in Chinese history. But the Ch'in had laid the foundation for central bureaucratic government that China would follow until the twentieth century.

The Han Dynasty Once again, the question of who should rule China was decided by war. But this time, the winning ruler was not a noble, but a soldier of peasant background.

This soldier, whose name was Liu Pang, established the Han dynasty with

The photographs on this page show more artwork from the Han dynasty. Here, two statues: the one at the top, of a real bird; at the bottom, a mythical dragon. Do you think the Chinese at the time of the Han dynasty believed in the existence of dragons? Why did they make dragon statues?

the help of many people who were tired of the cruel Ch'in. This dynasty lasted for four hundred years.

During the Han dynasty, Confucianism became the official philosophy of government. The legal code of the Ch'in was softened by the morality of Confucius.

What, if any, is the official philosophy of government in the United States?

In the Han government, officials were selected on the basis of ability. They had to take examinations. An important part of these examinations was their understanding of the moral obligations of the government to the people who were governed.

In the courts, an accused man was tried according to a legal code. But the judge would find out the circumstances of the case, and he would decide a fair and human way to deal with the offense.

What do you think Confucius would think about a trial by jury?

In the Han dynasty, Confucianism became the guide for governing and for living. The guide did not change for thousands of years. Confucianism became the basis for much of Chinese life.

The Philosophy of Yin-Yang

In Chinese philosophy two opposite ideas must work together to make a perfect wholeness of life. The one idea is called *Yin*, a feminine principle which represents darkness, cold, and death. The other is *Yang*, a masculine principle which represents light, heat, and life. Although these principles are opposites, they do not conflict with each other. Instead, Yin combines with Yang to produce everything that happens in life.

Look closely at the symbol for Yin-Yang to see how these two principles are connected. To the Chinese, each is dependent upon the other. If the light increases, then the sooner it will become dark. As the day gets brighter, then the sooner it will be night. The hotter it gets in summer, then the time to wait for winter grows shorter.

The philosophy of Yin-Yang applies to the emotions, too. Unhappiness is Yin, and happiness is Yang. Together they make completeness. Without unhappiness, one cannot know happiness. The more happiness one can feel, the more deeply unhappy he can become.

Yin-Yang always views things in balance, never in conflict—always changing, never as a fixed state of affairs. When it is day, it is already changing to become night. When you are sad, you are already changing into a happier person.

How do you think the philosophy of Yin-Yang makes it easier for the Chinese to accept bad times? Could you accept Yin-Yang?

The Effects of Confucianism on China From the time of the Han dynasty, most of Chinese life—between government and the people—was regulated by the moral code of Confucius. Rulers and government officials were supposed to believe that their duty was to rule for the benefit of the people. Problems were supposed to be solved by fair and acceptable decisions.

The legal code was regarded as a necessary aid to government, but the important decisions should be made on moral, not legal, grounds. Men gave their word in agreements with merchants, rulers, and friends. Often there was no written legal agreement. Men honored agreements because it would be morally wrong not to do so.

Confucius taught that a person should respect anyone who was his elder or who was superior to him in position. He also said that people should look to the past. These teachings have had an important effect upon Chinese family life. But they created a society that did not accept quick change and did not always think that new ideas and inventions were progress.

The Han Confucianism acted like glue—uniting the Chinese in spirit even when the country was divided as far as governmental administration was concerned. It made them a united people who were never conquered by outsiders. It enabled China to maintain the oldest continuing civilization in the world.

Calligraphy, or beautiful handwriting, is an ancient Chinese art form that has been preserved. Here is a modern calligrapher.

REVIEWING THE CHAPTER

1. What is a philosopher?
2. What are the five virtues and the five relationships that Confucius taught?
3. Describe the political philosophy of Confucius.
4. How did the Legalists differ from Confucius?
5. What were the major contributions of the Ch'in and the Han dynasties to Chinese government?

1. The Chinese had both natural and man-made barriers to protect their isolation. Why do you think they wanted to remain isolated? How can isolation protect a civilization? In what ways can it harm its development? Why would isolation be difficult to accomplish today?
2. During the Han dynasty men had to pass examinations before they were appointed officials. How did this practice differ from the way power was granted during the Chou dynasty? What jobs today require that a person pass examinations?
3. What do you think the saying, "ideas are more powerful than swords" means? Why were the ideas of Confucius so powerful? Name some other men whose ideas have influenced mankind. What qualities must such ideas have?
4. Do you think that change can come about as rapidly in an ancient country like China as it can in newer countries? Explain your answer.

ACTIVITIES

1. Pretend that you are an anthropologist and have just discovered the remains of an ancient civilization. Your job is to determine how advanced that civilization was. Think carefully about the kinds of information you need. Make a list of questions you hope to answer about that civilization. Now apply your list of questions to any civilization that you have read about.
2. The Chinese have produced some of the world's greatest art treasures. Form a committee to find out about early Chinese art. Some committee members might be assigned the task of finding reproductions of the artwork. A display could be arranged. Be sure to identify the dynasty during which the artwork was created. Also, notice the original use of the object, like a drinking cup.
3. Read, collect, and display articles about China. Look for clues about China's attitude toward remaining isolated.

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